

Governor Abbott Signs Disaster Relief And Preparedness Legislation Into Law

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Governor Greg Abbott today signed into law several monumental bills related to disaster relief and preparedness in Texas. As a result of Hurricane Harvey, Governor Abbott made this issue an emergency legislative item this session, resulting in several bills being passed that will better prepare the state for future disasters. Additionally, the legislature voted to appropriate \$3 billion in relief for Harvey-impacted areas from the Rainy Day Fund.

The Governor was joined by Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick, Speaker Dennis Bonnen, and members of the legislature including Senators Lois Kolkhorst, Brandon Brighton, Joan Huffman, Carol Alvarado, Larry Taylor, Paul Bettencourt, and Donna Campbell, and Representatives Dade Phelan, Alma Allen, Gina Calanni, Garnet Coleman, Sarah Davis, Harold Dutton, Sam Harless, Dan Huberty, Will Metcalf, Rick Miller, Mayes Middleton, Ron Reynolds, Jon Rosenthal, Valoree Swanson, Steve Toth, and Armando Walle.

The bill signing was held at Gallery Furniture in Houston, owned by Jim "Mattress Mack" McIngvale. When Hurricane Harvey hit Houston in August 2017, McIngvale opened two of his stores as shelter for Houstonians displaced by the storm. McIngvale's company also deployed its largest moving truck to help rescue those displaced by flooding.

"Thanks to the work of the legislature, we are rebuilding Texas stronger and more resilient than ever," said Governor Abbott. "In the wake of Hurricane Harvey, we saw the unshakable spirit of the Lone Star State through the generosity of Texans helping their neighbors. These important pieces of legislation are a symbol of that spirit, as well as a sign of Texas' commitment to improving the way we respond to natural disasters."

House Bill 5 (Phelan, Kolkhorst) requires the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) to develop a catastrophic debris management plan and training and establishes a work group to make recommendations on how local governments and property owners' associations can assist with recovery efforts. It also requires TDEM to develop a model contract for debris removal.

House Bill 7 (Morrison, Huffman) requires the Office of the Governor to develop a list of waivers that could be implemented following a disaster, and requires TDEM to develop a plan to assist local communities with disaster preparation contracts for services.

Senate Bill 6 (Kolkhorst, Morrison) requires TDEM to develop a disaster response model

guide and a wet debris study group for local communities. SB 6 also creates a disaster recovery loan program within TDEM for communities that suffered significant infrastructure damage.

Senate Bill 7 (Creighton, Phelan) establishes the framework for providing a total of \$1.6 billion through the Texas Infrastructure Resilience Fund (TIRF) as matching funds available to those communities hardest hit by Hurricane Harvey, and through the Flood Infrastructure Fund for statewide infrastructure projects to mitigate future flooding events.

